

# Romans 11:1-10

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[0:00] We find ourselves this morning beginning a study of Romans 11, which is a continuation of reasoning that Paul began back in chapter 8.

! And we're not going to get our study of 11 right if we don't understand where Paul has come from. It could, of course, be argued that chapter 11 is the continuation of reasoning that Paul began back in chapter 1.

But for the sake of brevity, for this introduction to today's text, I'll just remind you as far back as chapter 8. So, if you will, turn back just a few pages with me to chapter 8 and verse 23.

Now, prior to verse 23 of chapter 8, Paul has spoken of the glory that would be revealed to us, and then speaks of the creation's eager expectation of this glory, and then says in verse 23, and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, grown inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

So, these Roman Christians, Paul's original audience, and we, the redeemed today, are waiting.

[1:22] We feel deeply the tension of being redeemed souls living in corrupted bodies, and we long for the day when all things will be made right.

We recognize there's a tension right now, and we're awaiting the second coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Paul's aim in this last half of chapter 8 is to bring us comfort.

And so, he goes on, beginning in verse 28. I just don't want you to miss this. This is so key to the understanding of the rest of 9 and 11, 10 and 11, right?

What is Paul trying to argue for us, those who are in Christ? And it begins back in 8 and verse 28.

And I'm going to read to the end of the chapter, because I can't not.

It's too difficult. I can't do it. I have to read to the end of the chapter if I start in 28. So, listen to what Paul says. And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good.

[2:27] Living in this tension right now, all the things that we experience in this life work together for good. For those who are called according to his purpose.

For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined, he also called.

And those whom he called, he also justified. And those whom he justified, he also glorified. So, God is at work bringing about the holiness of his people to the praise of Christ.

And I would encourage you to go back and listen to the preaching on those verses, if you don't know what I'm talking about. But Paul goes on, verse 31. What then shall we say to these things, right?

These doctrines of grace. God's sovereign elective purpose in the world. What shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

[3:33] Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that, who was raised. Who is at the right hand of God.

Who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ. Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword.

As it is written, for your sake we are being killed all the day long. We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. No. In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation would be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul desires to root us in the immovable purpose of God on our behalf. Beloved, this is why we care deeply about what are commonly called the doctrines of grace.

[4:45] It's why I will preach it until I die. You need this kind of foundation. This kind of stability.

You need to know when the storms of trial come, and they will come. That God has saved you and that God will keep you to the end.

If in fact you're in Christ, you need to know that God accomplished it. If your faith is to remain immovable, then it must be rooted in the immovable purpose of God for you.

Paul wants you to see this. But Paul also knows the implications that flow from God's elective purpose, which is why Paul tells us of his grief at the beginning of chapter 9.

He has questions in his own mind as well. And praise be to God that under inspiration, he answers those questions for us. But he says at the beginning of chapter 9, I'm speaking the truth in Christ.

[5:52] I am not lying. My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

Paul was not frozen chosen. Paul says, For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen, according to the flesh.

I wish that I myself were no longer saved, that others might be. Paul knows that not all Israelites will be saved.

He has seen the broad rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ by Jewish people in his day. And he is working this out theologically. For his benefit, for the benefit of the Roman believers, and for ours. He goes on in chapter 9 and verse 6. But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel.

[7:02] The promises made to Israel are still true. Because the true Israel is not Israel by blood lineage, but through faith.

Paul's theme for this letter gets further developed here and into chapter 10. We are justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone.

Now I think that that brief overview will sufficiently bring us to today's text. But just remember that Paul wants his Israeli brothers and sisters to become his heavenly brothers and sisters.

This is part of his heartbeat through this text. In Romans 10 and verse 1 he says, Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.

A lot of people have taken the doctrines we call the doctrines of grace. And have in fact become cold and unkindly, ungraciously shared them with others.

[8:11] But notice that even as all of this explanation is going on, right underneath every bit of it is Paul's desire that people would come to faith in Christ.

So our text for today. Chapter 11. Verses 1-10. Before I read it, let me remind you, beloved, that this is God's word to us, written for his glory and our good.

And so we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands. I ask then, has God rejected his people?

By no means. For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.

Do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.

[9:14] But what is God's reply to him? I have kept for myself 7,000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal. So too, at the present time, there is a remnant chosen by grace.

But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace would no longer be grace. What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking.

The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened. As it is written, God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.

And David says, let their tables become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. Let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see and bend their backs forever.

Our text begins with another of Paul's anticipated objections to his teaching and an emphatic answer. We've seen this time and time again in this letter.

[10:13] The first half of verse 1, he says, I ask then, has God rejected his people? And he answers, by no means. Has God rejected the Israelites?

Paul's emphatic answer is the strongest negative Greek phrase possible. Some translations, I believe the King James Version, renders it, God forbid.

It means absolutely not. Paul uses this phrase 14 times in total in the New Testament, 10 times in this letter, and this is the ninth occurrence.

For your future consideration, you may enjoy following Paul's argument through this letter by noting those occurrences. Initially, I was going to take us through the entirety of the letter that way, but time wouldn't allow.

But here they are. If you care to note them, you might appreciate doing this in the future. Chapter 3, verses 3 and 4. Chapter 3, verses 5 and 6. Chapter 3, verse 31.

[11:19] Chapter 6, verses 1 and 2. Chapter 6, verse 15. Chapter 7, verse 7. Chapter 7, verse 13.

Chapter 9, verse 14. Chapter 11, verse 1. That's today. And chapter 11, verse 11. An objection met with this emphatic answer.

By no means. So Paul answers clearly here, no, God has not rejected his people.

And then he proceeds with evidence to back his assertion. Paul answers this anticipated objection in two ways.

And so if you want a simple outline for today, number one, as a witness, and number two, with the word. Paul answers this anticipated objection as a witness and with the word.

[12:18] Now, before we make any forward progress in the text, I want to address a potential concern. And you may be thinking, what does any of this have to do with me?

And that is an understandable thought. Why should the past, present, and future state of Israel make any difference to you? And I will tell you, right now, we are spending no time today on end times theology.

So, if that's where your brain goes, it's not what we're doing today. How is this text applicable in any way to your life today? Why? Well, sometimes the passage of Scripture contains within it obvious imperatives.

You should act this way or don't act that way. You should feel this way or don't feel this way. think this way, etc. Sometimes the passage of Scripture contains within it implied imperatives.

It's teaching us something that's true, and there's implications that come out from that. Today's text helps us to know how to think, at least in part, about our God.

[13:27] How to think about God on this particular issue. Paul wants us to see that God is faithful to His Word in this text. Paul wants us to see God's mercy and grace in this text.

And Paul also wants us to see God's judgment in this text. So, these are things for us to be looking out for as we look through it together. So, number one, Paul answers with this emphatic no to this possible objection to what he's been teaching as a witness.

He says, For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. Paul says, No, God has not rejected His people because I am one of those people.

And I have been saved by Christ. We begin to see here that Paul is speaking in totalities. Has God rejected His people in totality?

No, Paul says, because I am one of them. Paul qualifies himself as an Israelite by saying a descendant of Abraham, meaning he wasn't a convert to Judaism.

[14:41] He's of the bloodline of Israel and as a member of the tribe of Benjamin, which was one of the two most favored tribes of Israel.

He's saying, I have true pedigree as an Israelite, and God saved me. If anyone could be said to be Jewish, it would be Paul.

Listen to his own witness to this reality. Philippians chapter 3, this is verses 4 through 6. Here he's making the argument that there is no reason to have confidence in the flesh.

But he says, I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh. If there is reason, I have it. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more. Paul, by his own account, was as Jewish as he could possibly be.

Not only by blood, but also in his devotion and in his zeal. Considered perfect and a persecutor of that which opposed the Jewish tradition until Paul found sovereign, amazing grace.

[16:14] This is why he said of himself in 1 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 15, the saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost.

Paul knew that he was an undeserving recipient of God's mercy and grace. He deserved wrath, but God forgave his sins in Christ and granted him life everlasting in his Son.

So, Paul says, God has not rejected his people in totality for I am a witness to the contrary.

There were many other Jews that were saved in Paul's day. The church was largely, early, made up of Jewish converts.

But he used himself as an example. Look, God hasn't dismissed us entirely. He has saved me. He also answers this objection emphatically with the Word.

[17:22] And we see this in the rest of the text, verses 2 through 10. I think that a brief aside is helpful to us here. Note that Paul consistently reasons from God's Word.

He is an apostle. I believe he knows in some measure that he's writing under inspiration, but yet he reasons from God's Word.

And we do well to do the same. The Spirit of Christ takes up the Word of Christ to illuminate our hearts to the realities of Christ.

It's the tool that's given to us that's empowered by the Spirit. In a postmodern world that is ridden with opinions, we have something sure.

The revelation of God. Brothers and sisters, we should labor to know it. To have our minds shaped by it.

[18:30] You need to recognize that you're being disciplined all the time. Be sure that you're being led in the truth. You should have a worldview that is Bible-informed so that everything that comes to you comes through the Word.

And we should seek to persuade others with it. Now, note that Paul narrows his language a bit concerning Israel at the beginning of verse 2 and then in verse 5 to speak of a remnant.

So notice the first half of verse 2. He says, God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. He qualifies it.

Whom He foreknew. And then He gives us proof from an episode in the life of the prophet Elijah and He summarizes that proof with verse 5.

So too, also, just like at the present time, there is a remnant chosen by grace.

[19:39] So a people foreknown and chosen by grace. Now the episode from Elijah's life summed up by Paul in two and a half verses is found in 1 Kings chapter 19.

Paul asks the question, Do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah? And he presumes, I think, that his readers know.

Actually, their mind is going there. They may not have clearly understood it as they bring this objection, but their mind should be taken there. And perhaps you don't know the context here summed up in two and a half verses.

And so, turn with me to 1 Kings chapter 19 for some broader context. I think it will help you to see Paul's point this morning. So 1 Kings chapter 19.

Makes my heart happy to hear pages flipping and not it being dialed up on a phone. I like those hard copies.

[20:57] Okay, we're going to read verses 9 through 18, but before we do, you need to know that this part of Elijah's life follows the defeat of the prophets of Baal. A big, significant event in Elijah's life where Elijah proposed a test of altars and Elijah's was consumed from heaven.

If you're not familiar with that, oh, please go and read chapter 18. God was vindicated in this episode and the prophets of Baal slaughtered and Elijah expects that Israel will now turn back to the living God.

But instead, we see at the beginning of chapter 19, he finds his life threatened and so he flees to Horeb, the mount of God. And at the end of 40 days without food, he is tired, he is destitute. The victory that he thought was going to lead to the nation turning back to the living God did not turn out the way he expected that it would and it would seem that he goes off and is pitiful in a cave. So we'll begin reading in verse 9. There he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him and he said to him, What are you doing here, Elijah?

[22:24] God had not commanded him to go to this place. He just fled. God had directed his every step up to this point. But here Elijah is out on his own. What are you doing here, Elijah?

And Elijah says, I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, for the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars and killed your prophets with the sword. And I, even I, only am left and they seek my life to take it away. And he said, Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord.

Now notice here that there's no record that he actually does what he was asked to do. But it says, Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord and behold, the Lord passed by and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord.

But the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire.

[23:30] And after the fire the sound of a low whisper, or it could also be translated a thin silence, stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, What are you doing here, Elijah?

He said, he repeats the complaint, I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, for the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword.

And I, even I, only am left and they seek my life to take it away. And the Lord said to him, Go return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you arrive you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria, and Jehu, the son of Nimshi, you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha, the son of Shepat, of Abel Mahalah, you shall anoint to be prophet in your place.

And the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha put to death. Yet, I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.

Now, we can speculate broadly about what is happening on this mountain, but I think that God intends to display to Elijah the power of his judgment alongside his tender mercy.

[25:00] a lot to unpack. That's a whole sermon from 1 Kings chapter 19 that could be preached. But let's go back to Romans 11 and look again at Paul's summary.

There he says, Do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah? How he appeals to God against Israel. He has this complaint. And he's saying, God, they deserve your retribution.

Lord, they have killed your prophets. They have demolished your altars. I am alone and left, and they seek my life. And then Paul asks, but what is God's reply to him?

Now, if you're looking at the 1 Kings 19 text, you see that judgment will come. It already has. The prophets of Baal have been slaughtered at the end of chapter 18. You see that there's going to be further punishment for the rebellion of Israel.

But, Paul hones in on the end of that episode. I have kept for myself 7,000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.

[26:07] Judgment and mercy. Our text grants us the benefit of Paul's commentary in verse 5. He says, So too, at the present time, there is a remnant.

Just like back then, there's a remnant today chosen by grace. Paul then clarifies, which I love, that God's choosing has nothing to do with works.

It is not because the 7,000 didn't bow the knee to Baal that they are chosen, but that they didn't bow the knee to Baal because they were chosen. This is the doctrine of unconditional election.

It should humble us and it should amaze us. An undeserving people saved by grace. Briefly plug tonight's doctrines of grace class.

Clay's not with us this morning. He's not feeling well. I'm not exactly sure what's going to happen with that class. Yours truly may be teaching it. I don't know. But the planet amaze us. A people undeserving of God's grace and mercy.

[27:23] Paul goes on in verse 6, but if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works. Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace. That is to say that it would be earned.

And it's not earned, therefore, it is grace. Now, having spoken of the remnant, Paul goes on to speak of the reprobate, those Israelites who will not be saved.

Verse 7, what then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. We saw some weeks ago at the end of chapter 9 and into chapter 10 that the problem was they didn't seek it by faith.

They sought it through their works and not by the faith that was required to obtain it. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened. These Jews that Paul here speaks of were divinely hardened, but this hardening is not unjust.

God judicially hardens those who harden themselves. We need to be really clear about this. As we teach the sovereign election of God, we must also teach the responsibility of man.

[28:42] The Bible teaches both, and so we do well to see them as non-contrary. This is difficult to do because we have very finite minds.

A lady once asked Charles Spurgeon how it is that he reconciles the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man, and he said, ma'am, I see no need to reconcile friends.

He settled in his mind. The two things existed in the scriptures and somehow worked together. We need to do the same. We can readily see this interchange in the life of the Pharaoh of Moses' day, this judicial hardening.

Paul uses this Pharaoh in chapter 9 as an example of God's hardening. Listen carefully. You see a pattern throughout the beginning of the book of Exodus, but let me just give you two examples.

First, Exodus chapter 8 and verse 15. There Moses records, but when Pharaoh saw there was a respite, that is from the plagues, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them as the Lord had said.

[29:54] So, Pharaoh's thinking about letting the people go, but there's a respite in the plagues, and he hardens his heart against God's message to him. Then Exodus 9 and verse 12 says, but the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them as the Lord had spoken to Moses.

Divine judicial hardening. Paul is writing in Romans chapter 9 through 11 of the grace and mercy of God, but also of his judgment.

So, do not harden yourself, as many Israelites, did, did, is Paul's plea to you. As he helps us to understand the spiritual condition of Israel, this is what he would have us to see.

He cites Deuteronomy chapter 29 and verse 4, Isaiah chapter 29 and verse 10, and Psalm 69 verses 22 to 23 to make his point from the word.

He says in verse 8, as it is written, God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.

[31:15] And David says, let their table, a place that would have been a place of comfort and rest, let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them.

Let their eyes be darkened so they cannot see and bend their backs forever. Judgment on a people who had hardened themselves against the grace and mercy of God.

Psalm 69 is a psalm in which King David cries out for mercy and grace. He recognizes that he deserves judgment and he humbly flees to God.

So just listen to a few verses in closing that precede the verses cited in Romans chapter 11. Again, that's Psalm 69 verse 22 and 23.

This is Psalm 69 verse 16, 17, and 18. There David says, answer me, O Lord, for your steadfast love is good.

[32:16] According to your abundant mercy, turn to me. Hide not your face from your servant, for I am in distress. Make haste to answer me. Draw near to my soul, redeem me, ransom me, because of my enemies.

So has God rejected his people? No way. And we're going to see further into our study of chapter 11. That's to include a greater number of people.

He's got a sovereign work to save his church in play. God is faithful to his word. God is gracious and merciful.

faithful. And God's judgment justly awaits those who don't flee to him by grace alone, through faith alone, in the personal work of Jesus Christ alone.

Let's pray together. God is